



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

APPROVED
Meeting Minutes
City of Fort Lauderdale
Community Services Board
June 8, 2020 – 4:00 P.M.
Virtual Meeting via WebEx

October 2019-September 2020

MEMBERS		PRESENT	ABSENT
Noah Szugajew, Chair	P	9	0
April Kirk, Vice Chair	A	6	4
Jonathan Bennett	A	2	6
Elizabeth Cupido	P	9	0
Christina Disbrow (arr. 5:00)	P	6	3
Mary Kinirons	P	8	1
Richard Morris	P	6	3
Christi Rice	P	9	0
Terra Sickler	P	7	2
Marisol Simon	P	9	0
Dana Somerstein	P	8	1

Staff Present

Rachel Williams, Housing and Community Development Manager
Eveline Dsouza, Senior Administrative Assistant, Housing and Community Development
Simone Flores, CDBG Grants Administrator
Jamie Opperee, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communication to the City Commission

None.

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

- **Quorum Requirement – As of June 1, 2020, there are 11 appointed members to the Board, which means 6 constitutes a quorum**

Chair Szugajew called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Roll was called and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. WELCOME / BOARD AND STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MAY 27, 2020

Motion made by Mr. Morris, seconded by Ms. Somerstein, to approve. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

IV. HOPWA PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES FY 2019-2020

Ms. Williams reminded the Board members that the performance outcomes reported by Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) provider agencies occurred in the previous fiscal year (FY) of 2019-2020. She also noted that the HOPWA entitlement allocation and HOPWA Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act are separate pools of funding.

Sharon Alveranga-Jones, representing the Broward Regional Health Planning Council (BRHPC), stated that 71% of the organization's HOPWA funds have been disbursed during the past nine months. They have served 100 unduplicated clients. As the COVID-19 pandemic has made it more difficult for clients to seek housing, the agency has placed clients in hotels. They continue to work with clients to ensure that they will be ready to seek housing once they are working.

The Short-Term Rental, Mortgage, and Utility (STRMU) assistance program has received 287 applications. Unemployment in Broward County has reached 40.5% due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the clients BRHPC is currently assisting have lost work. Ms. Alveranga-Jones noted that the agency is using its funds more quickly than in the past due to the effects of the pandemic. They are currently serving 33 clients. These hotel bills are expected to come due in June 2020 and are estimated to be near \$82,000.

Rhode Rosulme-Rock, also representing BRHPC, further clarified that as of May 2020, there were 89 clients in BRHPC's tenant-based rental voucher (TBRV) program. 25 of these clients are making progress toward self-sufficiency, and two clients have purchased homes. Many of the clients who lost work due to the COVID-19 pandemic are either still receiving unemployment or have gone back to work. TBRV benefits are adjusted based upon each client's income, including Social Security income.

Dr. Rosalind Osgood, representing Mount Olive Development Corporation (MODCO), reported that the project-based rental assistance program is on target to exceed all its goals: 80% of HOPWA-eligible clients will meet their housing goals, and 100% of clients received assistance in completing a monthly budget. 100% of clients have also maintained regular appointments with primary care physicians, and 100% of clients were assessed for alternative housing resources and referrals as appropriate.

100% of MODCO clients who were eligible for HOPWA benefits were assisted in applying for these benefits. Five of the six clients had lost their jobs due to COVID-19. Three of the four participants in MODCO's Master Lease program have worked part-time jobs over the last 12 months, and 50% of these clients showed improvements in life skills. MODCO has put a plan in place during the ongoing pandemic to help people be screened for COVID-19 before they move into any of the agency's facilities.

Sharon Bryant, also representing MODCO, stated that from late 2019 through May 2020, their programs have served 25 unduplicated households. The assistance provided by

MODCO's Master Lease program is also based upon clients' income. Clients are asked to pay 30% of their income toward these costs.

Francisco Gomez, representing Care Resource, reported that the agency has helped clients by providing rental and security deposits. He emphasized the importance of housing as part of health care. They have helped 538 clients with the funding provided through HOPWA. Assistance includes food and hotel vouchers, rapid re-housing, intake procedures, and linkage with other services. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an increase in applications for delinquent rent and moving assistance. The agency recommends an increase in funding to meet the need for more housing case managers.

Jamie Powers, representing Broward House, advised that the agency's facility-based housing program has used 68% of its HOPWA funds. Although they were unable to accept clients for some time, they have accepted one new client since the end of May 2020 and are slowly reopening to new admissions. They work with the Department of Health to ensure that all residents and staff are tested for COVID-19. Residents are monitored for any symptoms.

Broward House maintained 54 clients through March 2020; however, due to COVID-19, some clients have transitioned to other placement options. 105 individual clients were linked with medical and follow-up care.

The project-based housing program is currently underused due to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, there are multiple projects for which permitting is pending. Once permitting is complete, the agency expects to meet its goals for this program. The case management team has implemented telecare services where available and has linked clients with assistance through contactless food banks. As units become available, Broward House is making necessary changes to update them. They have provided 63 unduplicated clients with project-based housing in FY 2019-2020, with 100% of these clients linked to medical care.

The TBRV program is currently on target to use all its HOPWA dollars. The case management team has linked 100 clients with appropriate telecare services. Six clients have successfully moved out of the TBRV program.

Mr. Morris requested additional information on the permitting issues that affected the project-based housing program. Ms. Powers replied that some of the agency's buildings had structural issues that required permitting, and the County was unable to approve a number of permits due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Edwin Cordova, representing Legal Aid Services of Broward County, reported that this organization has already assisted 106 unduplicated clients against a target of 105. Since March 16, 2020, when Legal Aid began working remotely, they have served 60 new clients. They anticipate another 100 to 120 clients by the end of the fiscal year. He

recognized Mr. Gomez of Care Resource for helping clients apply to Legal Aid for assistance.

Mr. Cordova continued that Legal Aid has served all their clients while working remotely. The grant funds have helped them complement the assistance provided to clients through HOPWA, such as STRMU. They have applied for two additional grants to help serve the community through legal assistance during the ongoing pandemic.

Mr. Morris asked if Legal Aid anticipated the addition of new staff to assist during the pandemic. Mr. Cordova replied that he hoped this would be discussed at today's meeting or the next, as the organization has a pending opportunity to hire an attorney for a half-time position. He pointed out that Legal Aid is often the last step before individuals become homeless.

Tiffany Arieagus, representing SunServe, stated that the agency provides housing case management services in English, Spanish, French, and Creole. As revenue does not cover all the costs of case management, they make up the difference through private fundraising.

Between October 1, 2019 and the present, SunServe has assisted 216 clients through housing case management and STRMU. This includes 58 unduplicated clients and 175 unduplicated applications for an authorized amount of \$95,776.69. Permanent housing placement (PHP) has been provided to 41 unduplicated clients in an authorized amount of \$57,512. The agency is on track to spend its full allocation for the contractual year 2019-2020.

SunServe staff was forced to leave its offices on March 6, 2020, as two individuals in the building tested positive for COVID-19. While there have been some complications in working remotely, these have been addressed and the office is expected to reopen on June 15, 2020. Two housing case managers will work from home and from the office in alternating shifts. Clients are required to make appointments. SunServe has created a remote interview room in which clients may meet in person with staff. This room is sterilized daily between each clients, and staff will be provided with masks and gloves.

Ms. Kinirons commended all the HOPWA agencies on their accomplishments and service during a challenging time.

V. HOPWA ENTITLEMENT ALLOCATION FY 2020-2021

Ms. Williams recalled that at an earlier meeting, she had asked the Board to approve the use of \$1 million in reserve funds, which is separate from the regular HOPWA entitlement as well as the funding provided by the CARES Act. She pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic has created new challenges for HOPWA providers, and meeting these challenges is likely to become "the new normal." Meeting these changing standards will cost funds that were not budgeted in the 2019-2020 HOPWA allocations.

Ms. Williams cited the approved funding for Legal Aid to hire a part-time attorney as an example, along with the need for additional case management by other firms. The need for these additional positions has doubled due to COVID-19. She recommended that the Board allocate the \$1 million in reserve funds to the HOPWA agencies so they may assess their ongoing needs and expand their service capacities. Some changes will not be based only on COVID-19 but will be permanent changes intended to stem infection control in facility-based settings.

Chair Szugajew advised that the \$1 million in reserve funds will be distributed as a one-time allocation at a later meeting. He added that it would be helpful to see a guide to help the Board determine how the allocations will be made. Ms. Williams replied that the agencies present at today's meeting are asked to consider the changes they are making which are not addressed by the CARES Act or their regular entitlement budget. They should send their proposals for these changes to Senior Administrative Assistant Eveline Dsouza as well as to herself. She cautioned that the Board may not be able to fund 100% of these changes.

With regard to the HOPWA entitlement for FY 2020-2021, Staff provided a brief presentation on how the agencies are currently funded. Staff recommends that all HOPWA providers receive the same level of funding as the previous year.

Ms. Kinirons stated that she would recuse herself from voting on this Item due to a potential conflict of interest.

Mr. Morris asked if the proposed funding allocations take into account previous discussions of shifting funds from one type of housing to another. Ms. Williams replied that this is not considered for the current year; however, when the next request for proposal (RFP) is issued for HOPWA providers, these changes will be incorporated. She reiterated that Staff's recommendation is for funding to remain the same as the previous year.

Mr. Morris asked if it would be possible to postpone a decision on this funding until the next meeting so it can be fully reviewed for the Board members. Ms. Williams advised that because the Board missed an earlier meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they are already behind schedule in submitting recommendations to the City Commission, and then to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), for approval. Further delays would mean funding might not be available on schedule for the agencies' use.

Motion made by Mr. Morris, seconded by Ms. Cupido, to level funding with adjustments for the amounts based off the budget presented.

Chair Szugajew reiterated that the entitlement allocation did not include the additional \$1 million from reserves. The funding recommendations are the same as from the previous year.

In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 6-0. (Ms. Kinirons abstained. A memorandum of voting conflict is attached to these minutes.) (Ms. Simon did not vote.)

VI. HOPWA CARES ACT FUNDING RECOMMENDATION

Ms. Williams explained that the CARES Act has awarded \$1,035,298 in HOPWA funding, of which \$62,117 will be used to offset administrative costs. This leaves just under \$973,108.12. Staff has reached out to HOPWA provider agencies for information on costs considered to be COVID-19 related as outlined in the CARES Act. They have received responses from Broward House, BRHPC, and MODCO thus far, with no responses from SunServe, Care Resource, or Legal Aid.

Ms. Williams emphasized that this does not mean the agencies not responding did not incur costs: instead, the types of costs they incurred may not be COVID-19-related expenses. Some agencies have already requested reimbursement for these costs as part of their regular allocation. The City is required to set up separate contracts and billing for costs incurred under the CARES Act.

Ms. Disbrow joined the meeting at 5 p.m.

The CARES Act requires the writing of new policies, on which the City is collaborating with HOPWA agencies. Expenses may include food and hotel/motel stays. Small costs for some agencies were covered by the City, such as the cost of remote access for individuals working from home. There is also greater demand for case management services, as more people are in need due to the pandemic. Ms. Williams recommended providing additional case management support from the \$1 million reserve.

Ms. Williams continued that expenses associated with hotel stays and STRMU are increasing. She encouraged the members to make a decision on the CARES Act funding today so the City can submit its request to HUD and make the funds available to the agencies.

Ms. Alveranga-Jones of BRHPC confirmed that the costs associated with the pandemic, particularly hotel/motel costs, have resulted in a strain on their regular budget. Dr. Osgood of MODCO pointed out that food costs are also important, as many clients who may live in “food deserts” do not have easy access to groceries or hot meals but must take their medication with food. She anticipated that MODCO’s additional needs related to COVID-19 would be expanded through the end of calendar year 2020.

The Board reviewed the agencies’ individual needs, which were as follows:

- MODCO: \$6803 for March/April 2020, as well as another \$15,000 for May through July 2020 and \$25,000 in additional Board-approved funds through December 2020
- BRHPC: \$40,800 for expenses already incurred as well as \$719,000 for a total of \$760,000

Ms. Williams noted that the available funds are \$9238 short of covering all requests related to the CARES Act. It was determined that the Board would approve moving this amount from funds allocated to the STRMU program, which would bring the available total to \$973,180 once 6% is deducted for the City's administrative costs.

Mr. Cordova of Legal Aid commented that the three agencies which did not submit expenses still incurred them; however, they decided it was in the best interests of their clients to cover these expenses using other funds and retain more money for hotel assistance and other needs.

Motion made by Ms. Cupido, seconded by Ms. Sickler, to approve the adjusted funds and account for the \$9000 overage [from STRMU money]. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 6-0. (Ms. Kinirons abstained. A memorandum of voting conflict is attached to these minutes.) (Mr. Morris and Ms. Simon did not vote.)

VII. GOOD OF THE ORDER

Ms. Williams reminded the agencies awarded with funds for case management, part-time legal counsel, and additional units to execute the contracts for these funds as soon as possible once they have been received so the funds may be added to their accounts.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Somerstein encouraged all present to complete the 2020 U.S. Census if they have not already done so.

Ms. Cupido complimented the agencies on working together to address issues in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

IX. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

Chair Szugajew advised that the Board will discuss the allocation of the \$1 million in reserve funds at the July 2020 meeting. HOPWA provider agencies are also asked to submit their budgets and goals for the next fiscal year for review.

X. COMMUNICATIONS TO CITY COMMISSION

None.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 5:36 p.m.

Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.

[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]